

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a network having software implementations deployed therein, a method for determining a set of software implementations to deploy to a client, comprising the steps of, maintaining information at a network location indicative of precedence relationships between software implementations, selecting a software implementation as a selected software implementation, determining if the software implementation has precedence over at least one other software implementation, and if so, setting the selected software implementation for deployment and deselecting the at least one other software implementation.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of setting the selected software implementation for deployment comprises the step of setting the selected software implementation for install.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the step of setting the selected software implementation for install comprises the step of including the software implementation in a list of software implementations to install.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of installing the selected software implementation.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of advertising the selected software implementation as available to the user.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of deselecting comprises the step of setting the at least one other software implementation for uninstall.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of uninstalling the at least one other software implementation.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of deselecting comprises the step of removing the at least one other software implementation from the set of software implementations to deploy.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the information indicative of precedence relationships between software implementations is maintained in a centralized class store of the network.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein the class store is associated with a group policy object provided for the client.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the information indicative of precedence relationships between software implementations is maintained in property values for the software implementations.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the information indicative of precedence relationships between software implementations includes a property value indicative of whether to replace or overlay another software implementation.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the client is a user, and wherein the step of selecting a software implementation as a selected software implementation automatically occurs as part of a user logon.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the client is a user, and wherein the step of selecting a software implementation as a selected software implementation occurs in response to a user request.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the client is a machine, and wherein the step of selecting a software implementation as a selected software implementation automatically occurs when the machine connects to the network.

16. A method for implementing a lifecycle for software implementations deployed in a network, comprising the steps of, maintaining policy information at a network location including software implementations to deploy to groups of clients and precedence relationships between the software implementations, receiving a request to deploy a software implementation to a client of a particular group, locating the policy information corresponding to the group, and determining from the policy information which software implementations to apply to the client based on the precedence relationships maintained therefor.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of determining which software implementations to apply to the client comprises the step of setting a first software implementation for install when the first software implementation has precedence over a second software implementation.

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18. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step  
of installing the first software implementation.

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19. The method of claim 18 wherein the installation is  
mandatory.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the client is a user,  
and wherein the step of installing the first software  
implementation is optional for that user.

21. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of  
determining which software implementations to apply to the  
client comprises the step of removing a first software  
implementation from a list of software implementations to  
install when a second software implementation has precedence  
over the first software implementation.

22. The method of claim 21 further comprising the step  
of installing the second software implementation, wherein the  
step of installing the second software implementation overlays  
the first software implementation.

23. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of  
determining which software implementations to apply to the

client comprises the step of setting a first software implementation for uninstall when a second software implementation has precedence over the second software implementation.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of uninstalling the first software implementation and installing the second software implementation.

25. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of specifying the precedence relationships for the groups of clients.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the step of specifying the precedence relationships for the groups of clients comprises the step of specifying a pilot group of clients that is small relative to a total number of clients of the network.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the step of specifying the precedence relationships for the groups of clients comprises the step of specifying a rollout group of clients that is relatively larger than the pilot group and smaller than the total number of clients of the network.